5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M54

if the Bedouins were willing to settle down to that sort of existence.

But the Bedouin, even though he knows of these places, does not care to give up his free desert life for the hard and disagreeable labor of the towns. He is faithful to his camels, and to his goats and sheep if he is fortunate enough to have them. He loves these animals and not one of them lacks a personal name. The little lambs and kids will be carried in his arms when the road is rocky or steep. The work of a cultivator, however, he hates, and he will nearly starve before descending to such a level as to engage in it. He looks down upon the townsmen with a lofty scorn and thinks of their hard labor as unworthy of men, fit rather for animals. This remarkable man regards himself as heaven's favorite, and he exhibits a contempt for the rest of the world and a satisfaction with himself and his life that would be sublime if they were not terribly pathetic.

Yet far from being ridiculous this Bedouin of the desert is one of the most splendid figures of our time. Out of that fearful poverty which amounts to constant semi-starvation, out of a lack of cleanliness that is continual degradation of the spirit, out of an isolation and an ignorance that make him a provincial in spite of himself, he stands as the world's supreme example of that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that have been the dream of the ages. Tied down and limited by the lack of all material things, his spirit looks on them with indifference and cheerful contempt and pines away only when immersed in the obese and self-satisfied materialism of the town. He rises triumphant over his environment by the sheer strength of his spirit. Ignorant of all the wis-

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin M34

dom of books, he has attained to that supreme wisdom which is a secret hidden from most schoolmen. He has learned that the world and all its material blessings are trifles compared to the things of the spirit; that the only things that are important for us to know are how to worship God and how to associate with our fellow men.

It is by the things of the spirit that the Bedouin lives. Take him away from his beloved desert with its poverty and death, its aridity and loneliness, and he will languish although his stomach may be full and his bed soft. Let him breathe the air of the desert's freedom and equality and hospitality, and his cheerfulness is unquenchable, even though his belt is tightened because of hunger and his flocks and herds are dying of thirst. The Bedouin's cheerfulness in the face of adversity is a proverb. His happy-go-lucky spirit bows to the pressure of no adverse material conditions whatever. Perhaps it is because he has so few of the various luxuries of this world to enjoy that he looks on them with such great contempt. Doubtless also his poverty has much to do with the emphasis he puts upon the things of the next world as compared to the affairs of this one. His hopes are centered the other side of the grave. To the Bedouin God is actually the greatest reality in the universe, and the greatest task of life is to please Him. Few men anywhere in the world consider their religion a matter of such vital moment as do the Sunnis, or orthodox Mohammedans, of the Arabian desert, particularly in the inland regions which have been shaken recently by the great *Akhwan* revival. We shall have occasion in later chapters to discuss the religious conceptions and practices of the Arab in more detail, but no description of desert life would be

k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Horrors of Summer

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312 361 283 182 221 During the summer months, i.e. June, July, August, September and half October, the Badawin world of North-East Arabia concentrates on its wells (*gulbán*), which in each case are groups of wells lying close together and in number anything from five to fifty. Here they camp (*igaiyathun*), their tents close together, their herds of camels and sheep grazing in close proximity, for the animals now have to be watered daily. Here the weary and long agony of summer has to be endured. Man and woman, child as well as horse, sheep and camel go through a period of real hardship and suffering. The heat is intense (the tent temperature often reaches 125° F.), supplies are scarce, *musábilah* is a torture, and last but not least the Badawin and his stock are vulnerable to any raiding party that may be paying off old scores, or thinks to add to its stock of camels. For in summer the whole Badawin world knows where each Shaikh So-and-So is camped.

Even in peace-time there is therefore always some anxiety, but if hostilities should exist between two tribes or groups of tribes, and the Central Government is busy elsewhere, then over a wide area no man's life or cattle are safe; and in addition to having to endure the intense heat and privation of the Arabian summer, strong patrols have continually to move about and guard the camel-herds and bring them in at night. Nor is this all, for if peace reigns, summer is the 735 651 time when the *zakát* tax has to be paid to the Central Government or Ruler of the State. So on top of all his troubles, and just when he is most hard up, the Badawin may any day expect his lord and master's tax-gatherers suddenly to appear with a *sarîya* (armed party). Woe betide him who tries to evade this tax! There is no escape, for like the enemy, the tax-gatherer knows where each Badawin shaikh has camped for the summer.

The enemy when anarchy exists, the Government official when peace reigns, have each got the wretched Badawin secure in summer. Both are hated; both, he believes, are out to hurt him, and both are the foe of him and of his kind.

221 132 At long last October, or the *wasm* season (the rains) arrives and small clouds begin to gather in the far west and south, and once more

181 thoroughbreds. No race prizes lineage higher, yet they are the most
554 democratic people in the world and the most individualistic. Among
177 them there is real equality. To certain families, by virtue of their descent,
577 they accord certain privileges, but as a courtesy, not as a right, and Badu sheikhs command respect only as long as they merit it. The traditional Arab way of life, fast vanishing to-day in contact with the West, owed much to Badu concepts, for the villagers and townsmen of Arabia, who form by far the greater part of her population, live close to the desert and were profoundly affected by it until motor-cars and aeroplanes removed for ever the need for camel journeys. Most of them are, indeed, of Badu origin, for the desert tides have always stranded the weak and broken upon the fringes of the Sown. Everywhere the Arabs have, at all times, judged honour and chivalry and hospitality by the standards of the tribesmen. Their love of liberty, their freedom from prejudice of class and caste, and their enthusiasm for poetry have come to them from the desert.

157 It is impossible to assess the character of the Badu, for among no other
577 race have so many contradictory qualities been fused together. I myself
81 have witnessed their courage and self-reliance, their endurance and pride of race, and I remember their patience, generosity, and unselfishness. But often I have been exasperated by their avarice and wearied by their endless
• [135] importunities. No Badu thinks it shame to beg, and usually he will look disparagingly at the gift which he has received and grumble, "Is this all
[137] that you are going to give me?" Grasping and avaricious, they will talk unceasingly of money and argue heatedly for days about a dollar, then they will slaughter a camel worth 150 dollars to feed a stranger. Loyal to each other, they are yet without regard for human life and will knife an unarmed herdsboy with a jest. Cheerful and easily amused, they are generally good-tempered, though passionate when roused and quick to resent an injury.

166 I have often wondered as I rode across the desert what the future, and even the immediate future, holds for my companions and their kinsmen. The discovery of oil on the Persian Gulf is going to affect them profoundly and make it impossible for them to continue in their old ways, even if they would. I think myself that the oilfields will empty the desert. This movement of tribes from the Yaman and the Hadhramaut towards the north and the north-east is a movement which has been going on for thousands of years. It probably started even before the great migration of the Qahtan tribes, when, overwhelmed by calamity in their homes round Marib, some of them pushed across the deserts and occupied Oman. In recent years tribes such as the Awamir, Ruashid, and Manahil have left their homelands in the steppes to the north-east of the Hadhramaut and moved out into the sands to escape from the incursions of more powerful
166 tribes pressing on them from the west. Having accustomed themselves to
177 life in the sands, they have penetrated ever further and further into the Empty Quarter. In the past twenty or thirty years as conditions have become more settled in the north, due to the extension of Ibn Saud's influence over the powerful Murra tribe, they have grazed their herds round the Liwa oasis and in the sands near the Trucial Coast. Now the money to be earned on the oilfields along the Gulf is drawing the Badu